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Time to get packing

Have emergency kit ready before disaster strikes

Michael Zennie

The Journal Gazette

When the American Red Cross opened its emergency shelters for Fort Wayne residents who lost power after the ice storm Dec. 19, many residents arrived with few belongings.

With predictions that it could take days to restore power, local Homeland Security Director Bernie Beier recalled how some people arrived without blankets or basic personal-hygiene items. Others neglected to bring medication or important medical equipment, he said.

The Red Cross, working with emergency-services agencies throughout the city, was able to meet everyone's needs, Beier said, but the helplessness of some refuge-seekers underscored just how unprepared most people are for weather emergencies.

In the event of a large-scale disaster in northeast Indiana, emergency-services agencies are prepared to meet mass needs like sheltering or feeding large numbers of people.

But every person should be ready to meet his own specific needs, said Katherine Mac Aulay, director of Northeast Indiana Red Cross preparedness and response.

Nobody knows what you or your family needs to stay safe, healthy and comfortable in an emergency better than you, Beier said. Putting together an emergency-preparedness kit is one way people can ensure they're ready for whatever the unpredictable Indiana weather can throw at them, Beier said.

Emergencies can come in all forms: prolonged winter power outages; floods and tornadoes that affect large areas; or more personal emergencies like being stranded roadside during the recent frigid weather.

Most suggestions for a disaster kit are items nearly everyone has in their homes: food, water, flashlight with batteries, first-aid kit. But some are less intuitive: video games so the kids have something to do during long waits, and photocopies of important documents like wills and banking information.

Many emergency agencies, such as the Red Cross, Indiana State Police and Department of Homeland Security, offer lists for emergency-preparedness kits. But every person's need is different, Beier said, and people should tailor their kits accordingly.

And each emergency creates different needs.

The Fort Wayne Allen County Office of Homeland Security's list, for example, includes more than 50 items.

“Most people don’t need everything on that list, but everybody needs something,” Beier said.

Shelter

When harsh winter weather hits, like the recent subzero deep freeze and the ice storm Dec. 19, the primary consideration is usually shelter – how do you keep warm when even short-term exposure to the elements could be dangerous?

The answer for most people is to stay inside. But if the power goes out and takes the heat with it, the rules change, Beier said.

And this is where an emergency plan comes in. If the power outage is short, a family can probably stay home and bundle up if the temperature drops. But if the outage looks to be longer in duration, it could demand the use of a generator, space heaters or leaving for a friend or neighbor’s house.

If the emergency occurs on the roads, state police recommend drivers stay with their vehicles. In cold weather, a car can provide warmth as well as shelter for several hours. An idling car uses only one gallon of gas an hour.

Light

Perhaps one of the most basic necessities in any emergency kit is a flashlight. No matter where the emergency occurs, it’s difficult to do much without an artificial light source.

But it’s just as important to store the batteries outside of the flashlight.

If a flashlight sits unused for an extended period, the batteries can corrode and ruin the flashlight. Beier recommends changing the batteries every six months.

The Red Cross also suggests having glow sticks, which can provide constant light.

In some circumstances, camping lanterns or kerosene lamps could be helpful because they give both light and heat. They do, however, represent a bigger fire risk than other light sources.

Food and water

For longer-duration disasters, the priorities turn to nourishment. Each person needs 1 gallon of water a day – 2 quarts for drinking and 2 quarts for cooking and sanitation.

The Red Cross recommends that families store a three-day supply of water for each person in their home.

People whose water comes from individual wells need to be doubly prepared. The pumps that bring fresh water to most wells run on the house’s supply of electricity; if the power fails, so does the potable water supply.

And everyone needs to eat. The Red Cross recommends high-protein foods like peanut butter, granola and energy bars because they pack a lot of nutritional punch, they keep for a long time and they come ready to eat.

The Red Cross also recommends stowing some comfort foods to help deal with a stressful emergency – things like candy, cookies and instant coffee.

Communication

In an emergency, it's important to be able to communicate with the outside world. In most instances, a cell phone will do. But preparedness experts recommend keeping a battery- or crank-operated AM/FM radio and a weather radio. The radio is important in the event of a disaster so emergency-services agencies can transmit messages over the air to people.

In a more mundane case, people who were staying in their powerless homes after last month's ice storm could have heard about the Red Cross' shelters and other news about the outages by listening to the radio, Mac Aulay said.

And a weather radio will alert people to impending bad weather or keep them abreast of developments.

First aid

Other than a flashlight, another agreed-upon necessity for emergency preparedness is a first-aid kit. It can be simple – bandages, adhesive tape, scissors, antiseptic – or it can include over-the-counter medications, latex gloves and syrup of Ipecac. Preassembled first-aid kits are available at city retailers including Meijer and Wal-Mart.

Special needs

Perhaps some of the most important items for a disaster kit are specific to a person or family. For example, families with infants need to stow baby formula and diapers. People who are on prescription medication or require medical devices should also plan for the unexpected.

One of the biggest recent problems at the Red Cross shelters involved people who arrived needing medical care for conditions that weren't advanced enough to require hospitalization but were too advanced for front-line emergency-aid workers to handle, Beier said. These included people who have to sleep in an orthopedic bed, need help bathing or have electronic medical devices.

And people should be prepared to care for everyone – and everything – that depends on them in the event of an emergency.

This includes pets.

After December's ice storm, the Red Cross' shelter on Coliseum Boulevard started accepting pets, too, because some of the shelter-seekers didn't want to leave their cold, powerless homes without their dogs or cats.

Put it all together

Kits can be cobbled together from household items or bought as a single unit. The Red Cross sells an emergency kit for \$60 that contains many of the basics, Mac Aulay said. People can buy them at the Red Cross offices at 1212 E. California Road.

Mac Aulay also stressed that it's important to keep all of the items together in a bag, backpack or plastic container – something people can find quickly and take with them.

And an emergency kit should be checked and updated twice a year to make sure flashlight batteries are fresh and food hasn't expired.

But the biggest part of preparing an emergency kit is thinking ahead, Beier said. "The most important part of your kit is the plan," he said.

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January 23, 2009

Planning, adapting key to managing emergencies

By CURT SLYDER
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Good communication, the ability to adapt to any situation and emergency workers' knowledge of disaster plans are part of the formula for successfully managing catastrophic situations.

These were the key points the State Health Commissioner told a group of emergency officials during the Indiana Department of Homeland Security District 4 District Planning Committee meeting Thursday morning at the Beck Agricultural Center near West Lafayette.

Dr. Judy Monroe used the June 2008 floods in southern Indiana to explain her points, focusing on the evacuation of Columbus Regional Hospital, which experienced significant flooding during the disaster.

"They evacuated 153 patients in a three-hour period," she said.

Though the flooding happened so quickly there was no time for staff to go over the official evacuation procedures, a drill employees conducted a year before the flood "made all the difference for them," she said.

The flooding also made only one of the hospital's exits available for the evacuation, she said. Workers had to adapt.

The meeting, held every two months, allows emergency management officials from District 4 "to better organize the district," said Mark Kirby, director of the Tippecanoe County Emergency Management Agency.

District 4 consists of Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Warren and White counties.

"Part of the lessons learned from (Hurricane) Katrina is that there are a lot of great plans out there. But they're very localized," Kirby said.

Different agencies sometimes don't know what others are doing and need to share the information.

"We'd be even more successful if we establish these relationships ahead of time," Kirby said.

A good example of multiple agencies working together was the recent corncob fire at The Andersons in Delphi.

Dozens of fire departments from several counties assisted in fighting the blaze in the 17,000-ton stack of corncobs. Discovered on Dec. 27, the fire took eight days to control.

Officials are still investigating the cause.

"Within the first 16 hours, we had depleted the city's water towers to a point below 50 percent," said Darrell Sterrett, assistant chief of the Delphi/Tri-Township Volunteer Fire Department.

It wasn't long before officials realized they would need a lot of help, Sterrett said.

"The need for resources was unimaginable," he said.

Putting together a plan to fight it, sending out the calls for help, then hearing back from countless fire officials "I've never even heard of," got the job done, Sterrett said.

So many people and fire departments responded, it took three pages on an overhead projection screen to list them all.

"When it's all said and done, there's no way to thank everyone," Sterrett said.

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Clarksville Fire Department receives Homeland Security grant

By **MATT THACKER**

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January 23, 2009 01:27 pm

— The Clarksville Fire Department recently received a \$7,245 grant to help with operations and safety.

Eight Indiana fire departments received funds from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant, totaling \$397,732, Sen. Dick Lugar, R-Ind., announced in a press release Thursday.

In fiscal 2008, Assistance to Firefighters Grants were administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Grant Programs Directorate in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration.

Fire departments with questions about the grant program may request more information by calling the help desk toll free at 866-274-0960 or firegrants@dhs.gov. More information is available at www.firegrantsupport.com.

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Kinnett fire remains under investigation

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

By Nick Schneider, Assistant Editor

Local and state fire officials took an initial look Tuesday morning at the charred rubble left behind in the fire at Kinnett Auto Sale and Rentals in Linton on Monday night.

Linton Fire Chief Gary Tannehill said a field investigator from the Indiana State Fire Marshal's office visited the fire scene and made an initial assessment. He said fire officials talked with owner Larry Kinnett and it was agreed they would hold off on actually sifting through the rubble to make a cause determination until after the insurance adjuster has a chance to look at the site.

Tannehill said it might take the adjuster 24 to 48 hours to arrive in town and to look over the fire remains.

"We are just at a standstill in the investigation part of it," Tannehill said in pointing out that the fire, police and insurance companies want to be on the same page in the probe.

The fire chief stressed that it was standard for the fire marshal's office to be called in for any commercial-type fire and there has been nothing found that would suggest foul play.

"It doesn't appear to be anything out of the way or unusual," he said.

Tannehill said he believes the fire may have started between two roofs over the back part of the car lot's mechanic shop.

"It was probably burning while they (Kinnett and employees) were there and they didn't know it," he said Tuesday afternoon.

Kinnett told the Greene County Daily World that he and other employees had left the building after closing at 6 p.m. on Monday. About 30 minutes later he got a telephone call that the building was on fire.

The fire to the Linton business, located on State Road 54 West, was reported at 6:20 p.m.

Kinnett, who founded the company in 1964, called the fire a "total loss" as far as the building, showroom and office was concerned. Three showroom vehicles, several others and a tractor in the mechanic's shop and a couple parked cars along the side of the building were destroyed by the intense heat of the blaze.

The fire chief said his department was called back to the scene about 3 a.m. and again at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday to extinguish some minor rekindling of the fire.

Tannehill said firefighting conditions were a challenge with the temperature in the 15 to 20 degree range most of Monday evening. Several hoses were reported to have froze up because of the frigid conditions. Also, a Jasonville firefighter sustained a minor ankle injury when he fell on ice that had accumulated at the scene from the fire hoses. He was transported to Greene County General Hospital for treatment.

No other injuries were sustained.

Tannehill credited the great work done by members of his department along with the mutual aid received from personnel with fire departments in Jasonville, Bloomfield, Wright Township, and Dugger.

Wright Township also provided backup manpower to the Linton and Jasonville departments while they were on the fire scene.

Tannehill pointed out that the aerial trucks provided by Jasonville and Bloomfield were especially helpful in helping to contain the fire and keep it from spreading to Bender Lumber Company, located immediately to the west as well as other residential homes in the surrounding area.

"We were able to save the other buildings and Bender Lumber thanks to the Bloomfield and Jasonville aerial trucks," Tannehill stated. "That really helped us save that building.

"It was kind of tough at the scene because of the cold weather, but everybody did a good job."

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Story URL: <http://gcdailyworld.com/story/1494870.html>

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Terre Haute firefighters recognized for service

By Brian M. Boyce
The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE January 20, 2009 10:55 pm

— For more than two centuries, American firefighters have answered the call of duty be it with bucket brigades, steam engines or computers.

And according to Indiana State Fire Marshal James Greeson, the one thing that hasn't changed is the people.

"The dedication I witnessed during those flood periods by the fire departments and law enforcement was remarkable," he said during his speech Tuesday evening in reference to the statewide floods this past June.

Greeson served as guest speaker for the Terre Haute Fire Department Commendation Awards banquet sponsored by First Financial Bank in Indiana State University's Student Union's Dede I and II.

Beginning his work in fire service at the Indianapolis Fire Department in 1970, Greeson retired from that department before accepting his new position with the state last year.

But the history of fire departments extends back 230 years, he said, noting its origins with Founding Father Benjamin Franklin.

From bucket brigades all the way to modern 911 systems, Greeson recalled his own early experiences at the Indianapolis department, mentored by World War II veterans, members of what he and others have termed "the greatest generation."

Fire Chief Jeff Fisher saluted the Terre Haute department, "I toast you," he said, raising his glass. "To the best fire department in the state."

Fisher noted in his speech that he hoped to "not top that this year," in reference to a dorm fire at ISU on the 2008 awards night, which cut the ceremonies short.

Fisher reiterated other memorable moments from 2008, his first year as chief, citing the department's taking over of fire protection at Terre Haute International Airport-Hulman Field, the June floods, the fire at presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's Terre Haute headquarters, the visit by President Bill Clinton, visits by then-Sen. Barack Obama and a fire at International Paper.

"This is not just an award," he said of Tuesday evening's presentation winners. "It's recognition by your fellow firefighters, your brothers and sisters."

Mayor Duke Bennett also noted the "blessing" of attending the dinner that concludes his first year in office.

Bennett mentioned his personal experience with the department as his own home caught fire earlier in the year, joking that one of the firefighters asked if he was going to show up at all the fires to check up on them.

“We’re very proud of you,” he said.

Brian Boyce can be reached at (812) 231-4253 or brian.boyce@tribstar.com.

And the winners are ...

- Firefighter of the Year: firefighter Michael Likens
- EMT of the Year: firefighter/paramedic Kevin Price
- Civilian Service Awards presented to: Darrell Summerlot, Brendan Kearns, Kristy VanSickle, Holden Smith, Mike Burn, Terre Haute Police Department Sgt. Harold Seifers and Lafayette baseball team members Michael Myers, Brandon Alford, Emilio Domondon, Kory Banes, Corey Aldridge and Andrew West.
- Paramedic Certification Award: firefighter Gregg Lawson
- Education Award: firefighter Jeff Mason
- The Life Saving Medal: firefighter Alan Moore
- Unit Citation Medal: Capts. Sam Lane and Bill Berry; Lts. Jeff Monroe and Joe Swan; firefighters Drew Phelps and Gregg Lawson.
- Fire Chief's Exceptional Service Award: EMS Chief Leroy Stewart
- Honorable Service Medal: Lts. Joe Swan and Jay Umbaugh, and firefighters Don Osborne, Ron Terrell, Brock Marietta and Richard Gallagher
- Meritorious Service Medal: firefighter Kenneth Ladd
- The Samaritan Medal: firefighters Larry Akers and Robert Johnson Jr.
- Honorable Discharge Medal for retiring with a minimum of 20 years of service: Capt. Stan Capobianco and firefighters Steve Johnson and Russell Mitchell

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24 bridges need replaced

Report: County bridges need major work by end of 2016

Ronald Hawkins rhawkins@reportert.com

January 23, 2009

MARTINSVILLE

Morgan County needs to replace 24 bridges by 2016, according to a bridge inspection report researched before the June 7 flood.

The study conducted by R.W. Armstrong and Associates Inc. of Indianapolis found that in addition to replacing 24 bridges, 15 bridges need to be rehabilitated and eight need to be repaired.

One bridge needs to be replaced this year, according to the study, and seven others have critical fractures that if the component failed "would be expected to result in the collapse of the bridge."

Bridge 31, where Whetstone Road crosses Indian Creek, is cited by the report as needing to be replaced this year. It was built in 1935.

Among the bridge's deficiencies are critical holes and serious corrosion. The truss' lower chords are near failure. Heavy trucks were observed ignoring the load limit postings.

The report estimates the cost of replacing the narrow, two-lane bridge at \$520,000.

Morgan County Commissioner Norman Voyles said the work on the bridges will be fit into the county's schedule using money in its cumulative bridge fund and Economic Development Income Tax revenues.

Design work to replace Bridge 31 is underway, Voyles said.

The most expensive bridge replacement recommended by the report is for Bridge 224, where Old Ind. 37 crosses Indian Creek. The cost estimate is \$1.8 million.

The report says of Bridge 224 that the structure is in poor condition with "heavy rust and advanced section loss." The two lanes of the bridge are intolerably narrow and don't meet current traffic standards. The county also has the option to close this bridge.

The bridge listed as second on the list of bridges to replace is Bridge 100 at the Cook Road crossing of a branch of Lake Ditch. The bridge's deck, the report says, is in poor condition and the top of a bridge railing is leaning. The bridge has heavy rust and the approach to the bridge is poor.

The cost of replacing Bridge 100 is \$200,000.

The Federal Highway Administration and the Indiana Department of Transportation require all bridges to be inspected at two year intervals.

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Morgan County flood victim buyout likely this year

Ronald Hawkins rhawkins@reportert.com

MARTINSVILLE

Morgan County's rapid completion of Federal Emergency Management Agency application forms will lead to buyouts of flood victims' homes by the end of the year and possibly much earlier, county and state officials said Thursday night.

At a meeting about the buyout process, Morgan County Council President Kenny Hale told residents, "All the paperwork is completed. ...I feel good about where we're at. ...

"I know it's a longer path than you'd wish. ...We are in good shape to get funding."

Morgan County is the only Indiana entity affected by the June floods that has completed the paperwork application needed to receive federal assistance, said Jan Crider of state Homeland Security.

"Morgan County is ahead of the line," she said. "This is much quicker than we expected."

The only remaining step for the application to be submitted to FEMA is completion of a mitigation plan and approval by the county and another jurisdiction in the county. To speed up the process, the application will be submitted for review before the official submission.

"You've been very patient and we appreciate that," Crider said. "We know how hard it is."

Crider said the state would ask FEMA to expedite the request. The federal agency has honored such requests in the past.

Hale said he has been working to receive Congressional assistance in advancing the county's application. He's optimistic, he said, that by the spring, funding will be approved. After the money is awarded, the pre-flood value of the properties will have to be appraised before residents receive money.

By the end of the year, if not earlier, residents who lost their homes in the flood should have money in hand, Crider said.

In the June flood, hundreds of homes were destroyed or incurred major damage. Many families were left homeless by the days of heavy rainfall, peaking with a torrential 9.75 inches that fell within a 24-hour period ending June 7, according to Dan Goins, who tracks Martinsville rainfall totals for an Indianapolis television station.

The multi-million dollar buyout will be used to buy 23 homes, Hale said. The homes will be torn down and the sites may not be built on again.

The properties in the county buyout don't include Martinsville, which is submitting separate applications.

In addition to the FEMA grant, other flood-damaged homes in Morgan County have been selected to be included in the Indiana Department of Transportation acquisition of properties for possible future use if Interstate 69 goes ahead as planned.

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Federal aid for fall flood nearly \$32M in NWI

By Times Staff | Saturday, January 24, 2009

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided Northwest Indiana nearly \$32 million in disaster assistance for last year's floods.

Steve Crider, a FEMA spokesman, said Lake County has received the bulk of the money -- more than \$28.4 million in grants; loans; and housing assistance to cover rental and home repairs as well as personal property losses and medical, funeral and transportation expenses not covered by insurance.

Porter County has received \$2.1 million, LaPorte \$1.2 million and Jasper County more than \$22,000.

The remnants of Hurricane Ike combined with a storm front to produce several days of torrential rain. The flood surge between Sept. 12 and Oct. 6 left hundreds homeless and caused damage to more than 15,200 region homes and businesses, particularly in Munster, Gary, Lake Station and Hobart.

Crider said the total payments for all 30 Indiana counties that sustained storm damage exceed \$75 million. He said FEMA hopes to finish paying all remaining individual private property claims within a month.

Reimbursement for road, bridges and other public property totals \$13.8 million statewide so far.

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Assistance for State's Third Disaster Of '08 More Than \$75 Million

Fri. January 23, 2009; Posted: 10:38 PM

- INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. -- Hard hit in 2008, Indiana received three presidential disaster declarations for separate weather events. The last of these declarations occurred when remnants of Hurricane Ike dumped flooding rain in northern Indiana along with severe storm damage in the southern half of the state. Federal assistance for Indiana residents, businesses and public sector [infrastructure](#) affected by the Sept. 12 through October 6 storms and flooding is now \$75.1million.

The assistance is in the form of grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and disaster loans from the U.S. [Small Business](#) Administration (SBA).

To date, 26,033 homeowners, renters and [business owners](#) have applied for disaster assistance.

* \$62,247,384 in grants and loans have been approved for Indiana applicants, which includes:

* \$27,971,464 in housing assistance to cover temporary rental assistance, home repairs and replacement.

* \$5,684,419 in other needs assistance to cover essential personal property losses, medical, dental, funeral, transportation or other serious disaster-related expenses not covered by [insurance](#).

* \$28,591,500 in U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans has been approved.

* Officials continue to calculate the hit to the state's infrastructure. To date \$13,886,789 has been obligated by FEMA for Public Assistance. This money is for the repair of roads, bridges and other public facilities and to reimburse state and local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations for debris removal and other disaster related expenses.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

FEMA, 500 C Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20472 - Disaster Assistance: (800) 621-FEMA
Release Number: 1795-059

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